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Reviews of recent publications

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Keywords

Borges, Puig, García Márquez, W. G. Sebald, modernity, Russian Twentieth-Century Drama, Heidegger, Pablo Neruda

Paul Kong. *The Raiders and Writers of Cervantes' Archive: Borges, Puig, and García Márquez*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2009. 148 pp.

In this study, Paul Kong intelligently relates Borges, Puig, and García Márquez to some of Cervantes's works, through the concepts of archive and manuscript. He considers that these Latin American authors respond to Cervantes's influence from a postcolonial perspective. Throughout this book of four parts, Kong engages in interesting processes of theorization, analysis, and speculation.

In Part 1, "Archives Versus Manuscripts," Kong explores different views about archive and manuscript. Following Wordsworth, González Echevarría, Foucault, and Derrida, he finds that both archive and manuscript are complex, complementary, and contrasting terms. He considers that the archive is a space for patriarchal dominion, control, and categorization; it has a totalizing, homogenizing, and paralyzing effect. The manuscript, on the contrary, though stored in the archive, is liberating, seductive, anonymous, unfinished, and cryptic; it allows multiple interpretations. Consequently, these two terms coexist in paradoxical opposition.

In Part 2, "Cervantes' Archive," Kong examines the meaning of *tropelía*, or 'magical illusion,' as used in "The Dialogue of the Dogs." In this story, Cañizares's witchcraft, transforming Berganza into a dog through *tropelía*, could be interpreted as a feminine refusal to be stabilized in a system of masculine patriarchal representation and domination. Likewise, the allegorical narrative of the story confuses appearance with reality, and constitutes, in Kong's view, a manuscript of *tropelía*. Accordingly, in Cervantes, "the concept of archive can be expanded to mean not simply a collection of manuscripts or books, but a single text which draws the others toward it" (50). Similarly, Kong analyzes the confusion between appearance and reality in "The Cave of Montesinos." Here, Don Quixote has a vision of some medieval legendary characters, such as Montesinos, Durandarte, and Belerma. He also encounters Dulcinea, who asks him for money. After leaving the cave, Don Quixote is not sure if he dreamed the vision or if it was real. The concept of *tropelía*, however, goes beyond this episode and is affirmed by Don Quixote's imaginary knighthood. His adventures are an archive of illusions.

In Part 3, "Post-colonial Archives," Kong considers the influence of "Cervantes' archive" on Borges, Puig, and García Márquez, stating that they "write in the shadow of Cervantes and inherit his memories, and their raiding of the archive can be regarded as Latin America's response to Spain's colonization" (65). Kong finds resemblances between Borge's "Funes the Memorious" and Cervantes's "The Glass Graduate." In the latter, Tomás Rodaja, has a formidable memory but cannot remember his childhood and original name. After drink-

ing a love potion from a Moorish woman, he becomes mad and thinks that he is made of glass. Similarly, Ireneo Funes, a Uruguayan, ordinary rural boy, was accidentally gifted with an extraordinary memory after falling from a horse. Becoming paralyzed, Funes was confined to a small, dark room where his memory could not stop working. His room became the archive for his memories. Another work of Borges related to the archive is "The Library of Babel." This library represents the universe and is composed by an indefinite number of hexagonal galleries. This archive is "all-encompassing, incorruptible, infinite yet impenetrable, solitary and useless" (86). Kong also highlights Borges's attachment to libraries in Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. In this novel, an evil blind man, Jorge de Burgos, dies by eating a poisoned manuscript. The negative reference of this character to Borges is direct.

Kong correlates Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *The Arabian Nights*, and Cervantes's "The Dialogue of the Dogs." In the same way as the Arabian Scheherazade and the witch Cañizares tell their appealing stories, Molina, an adult homosexual, comments six film stories to Valentín, his prison companion in Argentina. These are seductive stories of love, tragedy, mystery, and politics. Molina's narrative captivates Valentín in a process of "Molinization" in the same way as Sancho Panza underwent through a process of "Quixotization." Confusion between fiction and reality occurs within the six film stories, the text foot-notes, and the history itself. In consequence, Kong finds here three kinds of ambiguous archives: Hollywood movies, references to homosexuality, and an anonymous, authoritative, police report.

Kong considers that García Márquez adds a carnivalesque sense to the archive in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. In this novella, María Alejandrina Cervantes, the town prostitute, symbolizes the carnivalesque and grotesque. Her role can be related to Rojas's *Celestina*, Cervantes's Cañizares in "The Dialogue of the Dogs," and the Moorish woman in "The Glass Graduate." Her seductive power is witch-like, but the resulting *tropelia* has a restorative and regenerative effect. Her carnivalesque body and behavior constitute an archive that others can read. The fragmented narrative itself constitutes an incomplete archive. An anonymous narrator tries to reconstruct the crime of Santiago Nasar occurred twenty-seven years ago. His death was also carnivalesque, but cruel. He was stabbed by the Vicario brothers, and later mutilated by the autopsy of an inexperienced priest-physician. Justice was not granted, and when the narrator tries to reconstruct the true story, he also fails. Because of the lack of judicial documents, the narrator had to rely on interviews and his own memory. In the novella, García Márquez alters "the concept of archive as homogenizing, totalizing, and paralyzing structure" (119). The reconstruction of the original archive turns to be utopian.

In Part 4, "Archives Go Soft," Kong discusses how the Internet has become an integral part of postmodern life and communication. Following Manuel Cas-

tells, he states that the popular use of computers and hyperspace turns information into endless copies of virtual documents and manuscripts, stored into a seemingly unlimited e-archive. This e-archive appears to share the same patriarchal, originating, and totalizing characteristics of the traditional archive; and hypertexts can be related to the liberating and unfinished manuscript. Though, he does not link hyperspace to Cervantes's archive or *tropelia*, Kong justifiably assumes that "this is the Library of Babel in the age of electronic technology. The e-archive now becomes a non-attributable, non-originating virtual space" (131). Consequently, hyperspace can be an androgynous e-archive, fascinating to explore.

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J. J. Long, *W. G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. ix + 210 pp.

J. J. Long's densely argued volume represents a significant contribution to the field of Sebald studies. In little more than 170 pages, it sets itself the ambitious task of analysing the meta-problem of modernity in Sebald's fictional work. Modernity, Long claims, is a central topos in Sebald's work under which many of the other topoi that have excited recent criticism, such as the Holocaust, intermediality or the problem of memory, can be subsumed. Thus, in Long's view, the memory crisis that is central to Sebald's work, and which has fascinated critics to date, is part of a larger crisis produced by modernity.

Long's model of modernity in Sebald's work is that of a long modernity, reaching back past the nineteenth century to 1500. While such a large concept of modernity might run the risk of seeming excessively general as a heuristic concept, Long draws on a closely argued body of theory that lends coherence to his argument, chiefly among them the theories of Michel Foucault, but also including more contemporary theorists of trauma, memory and the archive such as Andreas Huyssen and Marianne Hirsch. Indeed, so complex is his theoretical framework that fully the first half of the volume is dedicated to explicating the the theoretical ramifications of key topoi at work in Sebald's fiction. Here, the topoi of the collection, the photograph and discipline are all categorised under the Foucauldian concept of power. Long's most intriguing and original argument is that traditional novelistic categories, such as narrative and individual psychology, have in Sebald's work been almost entirely replaced by discursive power structures. In his view, Sebald's work cannot and should

not be read using the conventions of bourgeois fiction, but instead through an analytical focus on surface topoi.

Thus, the second chapter analyzes the collection as a sub-section of the archive in Sebald's work, arguing that the collection, as a means of controlling and producing knowledge, is both an object of suspicion and of fascination throughout. In particular, the archive is a modernist tool that at once produces memory, state power and subjectivity throughout Sebald's texts. The third chapter discusses the photograph, arguing that photographs are both inherently linked to memory and that the indexical function of the photograph in modernity is only a product of discursive conventions, conventions that the photographs within Sebald's fictions disrupts. Nonetheless, Long suggests, Sebald at times produces a truncated version of the postmemorial act associated with photography. This is shown by his unreflected reproduction of an image of a Roma woman behind barbed wire from the narrator's father's photographic album in *Vertigo*, a reproduction that fails fully to analyse his father's complicity in Nazi genocidal crimes. The fourth chapter, "Discipline," considers the production of the subject by discourses of discipline in modernity. Here, such devices as the archive, the passport and the map are shown to produce bourgeois subjectivity throughout Sebald's work. Long also shows, though, that Sebald's work at times demonstrates the limits of discipline, delineating imaginary geographies and pre-modern orders where resistance to the totalising discourses of modernity can be articulated.

The second part of the book is devoted to analyses of the topoi of modernity in Sebald's four major prose works. The section on *Vertigo*, 'Wonder', claims that although the novel does contain accounts of the repressive structures of modernity, it also (uniquely in Sebald's work) re-invests the urban spaces of modern life with moments of magic and wonder. "Family Albums: *The Emigrants*" analyses the function of photography as a replacement for memory, arguing that Sebald mobilizes the family photo album in the service of post-memory and thereby rehabilitates it from its disciplinary bourgeois function. *The Rings of Saturn*, according to Long, employs walking and digressive narrative to vex the totalising narratives of history. Finally, "The Archival Subject: *Austerlitz*," perhaps the most thoughtprovoking and illuminating chapter, argues that, despite the tempting psychoanalytic topoi scattered within the text, *Austerlitz* is best read not as an individual psychodrama but as an archive of an externalised and illegible subject. The book concludes with a welcome discussion of Sebald's place within literary history, dismissing claims that he is a postmodernist.

Long's writing is both complex and concise. The brevity of the volume is a testament to the elegance of Long's expression, not of a superficial engagement with Sebald's work. Although this is not a volume for the theoretically unsophisticated—in other words, undergraduates may struggle with it—it provides a clear and rigorous overview of a key thematic complex in Sebald's fictions.

The volume does have some few shortcomings. The strong debt to Foucauldian thinking at times leads at times to an over-reliance on an all-encompassing and complex theory of modernity, which overshadows direct engagement with Sebald's texts themselves. Lengthy sections on—for example—Jacques Derrida's and Hirsch's different concepts of the archive are useful, but in so concise a book, they take scarce space away from direct engagement with Sebald's texts. Long explicitly, and rightly, excludes from his analysis detailed discussions of such Sebaldian themes as Jewish identity, the representation of the Holocaust or of the intricacies of his intertextualities. Nonetheless, at times, the analysis seems close to using Sebald as an illustration of Foucauldian workings of power, rather than using Foucault's theories to explore Sebald's poetics.

However, Long is more than aware of these dangers, and some of the most rewarding passages in the book are those in which he explores the ways in which Sebald goes beyond, ignores or subverts Foucauldian models of modernity. The complex theories of modernity discussed in the volume are always combined with a close and rewarding attention to the surface textual mechanics of Sebald's work. This book is essential reading for all Sebald scholars, and represents a significant advance in the study of the enigmatic workings of Sebald's poetics.

Helen Finch

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Andrew Baruch Wachtel. *Plays of Expectations: Intertextual Relations in Russian Twentieth-Century Drama*. Donald W. Treadgold Studies on Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia. Seattle: U of Washington P, 2006. vii+163 pp.

Andrew Baruch Wachtel's *Plays of Expectations* is a collection of essays that explore intertextuality in twentieth-century Russian drama, focusing mostly on the early twentieth century, and including other stage genres such as opera and ballet. The essays are not connected thematically but rather serve as individual illustrations of the principles of dramatic intertextuality that the author develops. Wachtel's understanding of intertextuality is close to Kiril Taranovsky's vein of analysis of Russian poetry and revolves around textual and cultural references uncovered by textual analysis of a dramatic work. As such, the book shuns the poststructuralist perspective and focuses on the figure of the author as an intentional creator of intertextual references. These references are mostly to other literary texts (though other arts are included in the analysis on several

occasions) and are intended to affect the audience's expectations through an elaborate set of allusions. Wachtel argues that dramatic intertextuality is based on thematic links, when "the locus of the intertextual activity is the theme or the storyline" (150) rather than language-based intertextuality of poetry that has been previously explored in Slavic Studies. Audience expectations are shaped by dynamic plurality of sources, which guide the spectator through the cultural landscape of the intertextual references.

Wachtel acknowledges the difficulty in theorizing the expectations of an audience due to the gap between the author's intentions, the produced text and the actual individual in the theatre. Wachtel's audience necessarily has to be savvy enough to tune into the conglomerate of references and previous traditions at play. However, in several cases the book resorts to viewing plays simply as scripts, or literary creations. Tolstoy's and Chekhov's plays are treated mostly as works of literature rather than productions that involve acting, directing, and stage design in addition to cultural and literary context. Although Wachtel argues that the nature of dramatic intertextuality is story-centred, I wonder if these conclusions are drawn because the book's intertextual investigation is often concerned with textual allusions and influences. Treating dramas as literary texts, in my view, limits the book's broad claims on dramatic conventions and audience expectations. Similarly the opera and ballet chapters focus on several aspects of the productions (staging, choreography) but fall short of providing a fuller and more complex picture. Nonetheless the author masterfully uncovers the dialogue with previous tradition and cultural context of the plays' reception. His arguments are persuasive and revealing, making the search for references and allusions not an end in itself, but a gateway to the broad cultural landscape that facilitates the interpretation and appreciation of the dramatic works in question.

Chapter 1 looks at Leo Tolstoy's play *The Living Corpse* in connection with the theme of resurrection, fake suicide and identity loss in Russian nineteenth century culture, and its influence on the twentieth-century literary and cultural tradition. Chapter 2 investigates the meaning of the seagull in Anton Chekhov's play *The Seagull* to uncover the complex relationships the characters have with the seagull as a metaphor and how the cultural polemic between symbolism and realism in turn-of-the-century Russia becomes the subject of the play. Chapter 3 deals with a relatively obscure play by Aleksandr Blok titled after his canonical poem, *The Unknown Woman*, and investigates Blok's exploration of the genre of narrative drama in comparison to that of lyrical poetry. Chapter 4 presents an impressive analysis of Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Petrushka* and how its multiple creators (Aleksandr Benois, Igor Stravinsky and the choreographer Michel Fokine) contributed to the synthetic nature of the work, which combines high and low elements of the theatrical entertainment, turning it into a powerful spectacle and a unique modernist creation. Chapter 5 concerns the opera

by Dmitry Shostakovich *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and the strategies of cultural exclusion and inclusion of the pre-revolutionary Russian literary figures into the Soviet canon. The chapter explains Shostakovich's failure to adapt Leskov's novella to the Soviet stage via intertextual connection with the eroticized vision of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* by the painter Boris Kustodiev. Chapter 6 looks at an absurdist play by Aleksandr Vvedensky *The Ivanovs' Christmas Party*, arguing that the play provides a critique of the totalitarian conditions of the 1930s through the prism of the culture of childhood in Russia and the Soviet Union. Chapter 7 compares the contemporary short story by Viktor Erofeev *Life With an Idiot* and the opera by Alfred Schnittke based on it. The author discusses how the opera enriches and deepens the original story via intertextual play.

In the end the book raises an intriguing question whether Russian literature is especially conducive to intertextual analysis since its relatively short and intense history calls for a literary and cultural dialogue. It seems like a very plausible explanation, however, I wonder whether this statement has as much to do with Slavic Studies as it does with Russian literature. In the introduction Wachtel mentions that Slavic Studies are positioned well behind other language and literature disciplines in terms of the theoretical developments of the second half of the twentieth century, except, he notes, in the area of intertextuality. It might be worth considering if underrepresentation of the poststructuralist theories of intertextuality, advanced by such scholars as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva, in both Slavic Studies and *Plays of Expectations* is the reason why Russian literature is mostly seen in Slavic scholarship as a "citational epic" (Ilya Kutik). Undoubtedly, Wachtel's book provides a brilliant example of how both lines of thought could be valuable for scholarship. The book is written in an elegant and lucid manner, with a distinct style and authorial voice and is a pleasure to read. It is recommended for Slavic and theatre studies specialists, especially those interested in early modernist theatre.

Volha Isakava
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David Jenemann. *Adorno in America*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007. 280 pp.

David Jenemann's *Adorno in America* is a welcome new addition to studies of Frankfurt School theorist Theodor W. Adorno, which in recent years have attempted to better understand the experience of the German-sometimes-Jewish-exile in the United States. Jenemann, assistant professor of English at the Uni-

versity of Vermont, originally considered *Transmissions* for the title of his study of Adorno's American years. Indeed, his book offers an extended mediation on Adorno's legacy, or as he describes it, "transmissions" of Adorno's work in American media culture, cultural criticism, and philosophical and intellectual history. To be sure, there are many faulty or mendacious transmissions regarding the Frankfurt theorist, just as one might imagine false messages coming over the airwaves, or more presently, over the Internet: Adorno the elitist. Adorno the anti-American. Adorno the obscurantist, Euro-chauvinist sourpuss. Jenemann bravely blocks these transmissions, while also opening newer, hopefully more accurate ones, as he draws connections between Adorno's cultural criticism and later theorists from Guy Debord and Marshall McLuhan to Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben and Antonio Negri. In so doing, Jenemann argues that Adorno's work and life demand not only reconsideration, but also a deeper understanding of their contemporary relevance.

Adorno in America offers less of an investigation of Adorno's great concepts such as negative dialectics, autonomy, nonidentity, as it endeavors to show how Adorno's personal experience in the United States influenced his approach to culture in a more positive manner than previously understood. Conceding to both Martin Jay and Fredric Jameson in their studies that introduced Adorno to an American public, Jenemann agrees Adorno was a European mandarin and may have given the impression of cultural conservative. However, Jenemann hopes to show *pace* Jay and especially Jameson, that Adorno also greatly admired American democracy, and even, he claims, felt "genuine love" (188) for his adopted country, which granted him citizenship and a passport, which he carried from 1943 to 1954.

The special virtue of *Adorno in America* is the empirical material: unpublished letters, FBI files, and journal entries. Reading these, Jenemann provides an entertaining and thought-provoking account of American surveillance of the Frankfurt School members. A telegram Max Horkheimer sends on a roadside stop to Los Angeles ignites a frenzy of FBI activity, which is only briefly abated when J. Edgar Hoover himself intervenes, assuring his aides that the telegram indeed refers to "legitimate business" of the Frankfurt Institute (xiii). Surely Adorno experienced the U.S. and American English often as menacing, no doubt he found much evidence to support a pessimistic outlook on cultural life and social domination in America, but he was also a quick study. Taking notes of slang, or interesting idiom, peppering his own work with them. Ultimately, as Jenemann also amply demonstrates, Adorno enjoyed the status of a cultural insider who immersed himself in "myriad forms of entertainment and communication" (xvii).

Revisiting Adorno's disagreements with Paul Lazarsfeld's Princeton Radio Research Project, Jenemann offers further reflections on Adorno's discomfort with quantitative research, while Adorno also took the opportunity to recon-

sider his own commitment to theory as a method of understanding subjectivity and modernity. Sometimes with more intellectual than practical success, Adorno deployed his research of radio listening habits to suggest “alternative radio practices” (102). He embarked on other adventures in media, making friends and connections in Hollywood, conceiving of a Marxist critique of cinematic illusion; even trying his hand at filmmaking. Jenemann also explores Adorno’s familiarity with two particularly American genres, cartoons and pulp fiction, arguing that pulp fiction and Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* both participate in the modernist project of exploring the reification of subjectivity.

Jenemann’s efforts at revision of Adorno reception draw on other newer studies including Stefan Müller-Doohm’s 2003 biography *Adorno* as well as ideas of Adorno’s radical non-identity. But Jenemann sets his sights even higher: he wants to show how Adorno opens the way for understanding the evils of contemporary social domination in America while also suggesting that Adorno’s ambivalence offers a template for newer cultural theory that will help conceive of a substantive democracy. Jenemann asserts: “Adorno’s response to America, his intermingled love and critique, his horror and his attraction, should be understood in terms of this embrace of ambivalence” (190). This ambivalence is supposed to enable freedom; Jenemann argues, “Americans need Adorno and the type of freedom he espoused” (190). This is a very intriguing claim, namely that Adorno the exile, who supposedly wreaked his anti-Americanism on the country that took him in during the Second World War, was somehow able in his very alienation and ambivalence to imagine a more viable American freedom. But then the question arises, why did American academics cling so resolutely to this false image of Adorno? Did Adorno’s supposed anti-Americanism enable Americans to better criticize the American culture industry? Or did it allow American academics to more easily reject Adorno and indulge in a certain *Schadenfreude* against the Augustinian intractability of their European critic?

Jenemann’s hopes for his revision and the great claims he makes about Adorno-inspired American freedom are even less clear. In his coda, Jenemann mounts his own efforts at cultural critique, attacking the 2001 Patriot Act and the intensified surveillance of the American people after 9/11. Unfortunately, reading the coda has an almost cringe-inducing effect and it remains uncertain whether a reader might recoil because Jenemann strikes a nerve mentioning the political endangerment of American civil liberties after 9/11. Or, if such a leap from conceptual thinking to cultural application feels awkward simply because the leap from biographical revision to theoretical praxis is usually perilous. It would seem fitting that Adorno would refuse transmission. Jenemann quotes the late Edward Said on this account. Said asserts Adorno “cannot be paraphrased, nor, can he in a sense be transmitted; the notion of an Adorno *films* is quite laughable” (xxviii). Jenemann demures, insisting that Adorno’s work

and life are neither Holy Writ nor prophetic experience and that one is indeed free to speculate about transmission of Adorno to contemporary circumstances and theory. Surely, Jenemann is not the first to contemplate Adorno transmissions. Many recent theorists have appropriated Adorno for a whole spectrum of political and philosophical ends from the potential affinities of nonidentity and deconstruction to Jenemann's claims about parallels to Agamben and Negri. An electronic, genealogical metaphor such as transmission, also allows for non-transmission, misunderstanding and/or reinterpretation. Whether Said is right that there can be no Adorno *files*, Adorno cannot deny any of the paternity claims that have pursued him. Jenemann convinces in his discussions of Adorno's views of the totally administered society and of the possibility freedom in America. For Adorno, both concepts were subject to revision, just as his own reception now has been as well.

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Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. *Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry*. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2007. 136 pp.

This collection consists of revised essays on the subject of Martin Heidegger and poetry offered originally as presentations between 1987 and 1998 and revised as late as 2002. While the title bears the word poetry, it could be subtitled "The Hölderlin Wars." For at issue here is the meaning of Hölderlin and German Romanticism in the writings of Heidegger, Benjamin, Adorno, and to a lesser extent, Badiou. In the "prologue" Lacoue-Labarthe's framing question is that of the relationship of Heidegger's interpretation of poetry to his entanglement in Nazism. The central motif in this book is the role of myth. In the face of his split with Nazi institutions, Heidegger saw it as the task of the German nation to engender its originary History, a task that concerns itself with the aesthetic, which is also to say with mythology, for "art, precisely as the power of (re)beginning, is essentially myth." Because art is always poetry for Heidegger, poetry as myth ("the possibility of the sacred") gives a view of the world to a people. Lacoue-Labarthe places Heidegger at the end of the long story of the German mythology—the concern with inscribing the people historically and mythically, a story traced backward to Schelling and forward to both Nazism and what Lacoue-Labarthe calls Heidegger's national aestheticism.

In Chapter 1 ("Poetry, Philosophy, Politics"), with reference to Badiou's contention that Paul Celan's poetry marks the end of the Heideggerian age of

poets, the concern is with the question whether poetry should “cease to be of interest to philosophy.” For Badiou this would allow philosophy to devote itself unencumbered to its own sphere of the Platonic *matheme*. Lacoue-Labarthe argues that the absolutizing of poetry found in the Heideggerians is due not to philosophy’s relation to poetry but to myth. The crux is less with the suturing of philosophy to poetry than it is this connection’s politics. With a nod to Schelling, the German tradition of anti-Platonism, the nostalgia for the archaic, and the idea of a German people capable of re-achieving the beginnings in which poetry and philosophy (perhaps politics as well) are rejoined—in short the projects for a new mythology—are for Lacoue-Labarthe the “seeds of a disastrous politics.” According to Lacoue-Labarthe, there is a lineage that Heidegger harvests and embodies in the figure of *Sage* (*muthos*) as myth—and “there is something fundamentally *dubious* about this.” Lacoue-Labarthe points to a shared rhetoric leading from Schelling (“new mythology [...] to arise”) to Nietzsche (“myth of the future”) and to Rosenberg (“myth of the twentieth century”).

This chapter shows Lacoue-Labarthe observing the 1930s debate between Heidegger’s mythologizing misapprehension of Hölderlin (and early German Romanticism) and Benjamin’s philosophical interpretation, a debate in which Lacoue-Labarthe decisively awards the victory to Benjamin. He points to Benjamin’s reading of Hölderlin and romanticism as an alternative to both Badiou (romantic poetry was always already the *matheme* as prose) and Heidegger. It turns out then that the idea of Romantic poetry was not mythical enthusiasm but prose, that is, the sobriety and calculation of art (Hölderlin), how it is numerable and intelligible (Novalis and Schlegel). Lacoue-Labarthe seems to suggest that it is this lineage that poetry as a “work of thought,” perhaps the poetry of Celan, carried into the twentieth century.

In Chapter Two (“*Il faut*”), Lacoue-Labarthe attempts to uncover what he calls the “infinitely reticent complicity” of Adorno and Heidegger—how they at once do battle and at the same time acknowledge “the absolutely privileged relation of (great) poetry to philosophy.” Whereas Heidegger attempts to engage Hölderlin in a nationalist remythologization, Adorno for his part insists on the proximity of Hölderlin to the Hegelian dialectic. Following Benjamin’s essay “Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin” (1914-15), a foundational essay in readings of poetry within German Studies, Adorno opposes Heidegger’s move with his own demythologization. While Benjamin’s approach, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, was marked by the “mythic” (“the internal tension and contradiction of the mythical elements”), it was free of both the “myth” (the particular myth) and the “mythological” (“the essential unity of myths”). Benjamin’s achievement—superior to that of both Adorno and Heidegger—is in locating in the poem the paradoxical failure of myth—that is the lack of the myth that should sustain it, again, sobriety and calculation. In Lacoue-Labarthe’s phrasing, this lack is at once the disappearance of the mythical figure

and at the same time the remains of its inefaceable trace.

In the final of three essays ("The Courage of Poetry") Lacoue-Labarthe draws on Heidegger's Third-Reich-era published and unpublished remarks to investigate the claim that by becoming open to the power of Hölderlin's poetry one is engaging in politics in its most authentic sense. Heidegger devoted himself to locating in Hölderlin the announcement of the coming or the default of the gods. Lacoue-Labarthe gives this the term the "theologico-political," which is furthermore bound up with an "archi-fascism" that would oppose the vulgarity of real fascism. The figure of sobriety (central to Benjamin's interpretation) appears here as it does at the end of each of Lacoue-Labarthe's readings in order to redeem the poetic reading from Heidegger. This figure is not sufficiently explained, an explanation that one would like to see, as in every essay it is the preferred alternative to Heidegger's mythologizing.

Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry is a fascinating collection not only because of its contribution to the discourse of poetry and philosophy but also because it offers a sweeping condemnation of the German mythical impulse, one that is intriguing if not satisfactorily developed. Spared the condemnation is the curious self-effacing figure of myth marked by sobriety, an alternative that calls out for further investigation.

Derek Hillard

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Horacio Legras. *Literature and Subjection: The Economy of Writing and Marginality in Latin America*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2008. 288 pp.

In *Literature and Subjection*, Horacio Legras advances a highly provocative study of the literary form and the subject of literature in modern Latin America. Through a series of nuanced and intricate discussions of literature's aesthetic-subjective form and the institution of Latin American literature, this book suggests the presentation of a form of subjectivity, specific to literature, that is implicitly, and necessarily, inscribed as the simultaneous figuration of the recognition of difference and its subjection. Legras characterizes this book as a "cultural study of the literary form," and one that, as such, heeds the "unambiguous calls for a postcolonial perspective in our work on Latin America" (2, 6). Given the relatively little work directly devoted to the pursuit of the question of subject formation in Latin American literary study, Legras's book, despite its self-imposed limitations, constitutes a timely and inspired contribution to

discussions concerning the subject's installation in the scene of Latin American writing and the forms its textual mediation takes in literary representation.

Legras's book is divided into seven chapters, which includes an introduction, a chapter on the subject of German Idealism and the literary-aesthetic of Mexico's Ateneo generation (ch. 4), a chapter on alphabetic writing and Indigenous literature (ch. 3), and chapters devoted specifically to readings of Juan José Saer (ch. 2), Augusto Roa Bastos (ch. 5), the novels of the Mexican Revolution (ch. 6), and José María Arguedas (ch. 7). These latter chapters provide captivating readings of well- and slightly lesser-known works, such as Saer's *The Witness* and Roa Bastos's *Son of Man*. In each case however, particularly in his discussions of Martín Luis Guzmán, Nellie Campobello, Rafael Muñoz, and José María Arguedas, Legras offers critical insight into the multiple and contradictory impulses governing each author's literary commitment to ever-more inclusive national imaginaries, and the inevitable (yet still literary) subsumption of that subject of difference into the logic of the Same. These four chapters are exemplary pieces of criticism that stand on their own merit; together, these chapters constitute the book's key contribution to debates about literature, the nation-state, and power in Latin America.

Unfortunately, the critical frame through which these readings are conceptually bound proves unable to withstand much scrutiny. The main source of *Literature and Subjection's* difficulties lies in Legras's conceptualization of literature—of what literature is said both to be and do. Indeed, Legras's claims in this book hinge on this very particular understanding. In the introduction, Legras takes special care to emphasize the need to account for the “dual perspective ... of the literary experience,” by which he means the tension between the aesthetic, formal aspects of literature and its historical embodiment as a cultural institution (3). Though these elements are not identical—nor entirely opposed—they both constitute the dynamic of the literary experience through whose gap said subject is made to appear. As such, Legras seeks to delineate between literature's “transcendental” and “actual” aims, its “mystifying” and “naturalized” effects, and between its “singularity and autonomy” and its deployment as an “apparatus of capture and adaptation” (2-4); distinctions within the literary experience which for Legras are fundamental, inextricable, and productive of the very economy of recognition and subjection that he reads in “the extimate character of literature” (96). Defining the field of literature as the productive tension between conflicting forces is not, in itself, a problem. However, what might prove problematic is when literature's fundamental duality is framed as one between outside and inside: between its transcendental essence and the ideological uses to which it is put; as simultaneously “instituting” (transcendental) and “institutional” (historical) (5).

The problems this figuration creates for the underlying position of *Literature and Subjection* are significant. For one cannot, without risk, posit lite-

rature's aesthetic form as inherently exterior and autonomous to disciplinary influence. This ultimately suggests that what in the literary experience resists institutionalization derives not from the problems of writing in general, but from literature's own essential (instituting) positive properties. Unless one is already persuaded of this particular character of literature, which even for Legras is "mystifying, ungrounded, and excessive" (4), this argument is a difficult one to sustain. One cannot ignore that modern aesthetics is itself already an institutionalized discursive formation of its own. So though Legras quite rightly points to literature's very lack of foundation as its foundation, it nevertheless remains for him an "instituting" sphere of presence and truth that not only proves "resilient" to its own institutionalization, but thereby distinguishes itself from all other discursive formations as this instituting, creative power seems to be ascribed to literature alone (87). While Legras appeals to Kant, Schiller, and Hegel to reconcile this irreducibly metaphysical aspect of literature, as demonstrated in chapter 4, the other critical theorists he employs throughout the rest of the book—Lacan, Butler, Žižek, Agamben—have in their own venues sought to reveal the ideological core of any and all affirmations of such positivity. *Literature and Subjection* therefore exhibits an underlying tension of its own, perhaps unavoidable given these matters, that ultimately highlights the need to question the critical relation between literature as both discourse and object.

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Hélène Cixous. *Love Itself in the Letterbox*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Cambridge and Malden: Polity, 2008. 142 pp.

Love Itself in the Letterbox revisits and expands upon some of the recurrent themes of Hélène Cixous's recent work: love, memory, writing, reading, loss and death. Its intimate first-person narrative weaves a complex series of vignettes around the notion of love letters: what these are, what they may contain, how they survive and what happens when they are lost. Just as is the case with many of Cixous's texts, there is no discernible plot, since this author interrogates the significance and the importance of such conventional literary notions as character, narrator, plot and author. Instead, the nine chapters constitute a meditation upon the processes of reading and writing, and how these capture, create and alter emotions and memories.

Cixous first became well-known in the Anglo-American academy for her feminist theory of the 1970s, most notably her theorization of *écriture féminine*.

More recently she has concentrated on drama, essays and fiction. Many of her works from the 1990s onwards are first-person accounts of memories, particularly those of the writer's childhood in Algeria. While Algeria is not the focus of *Love Itself in the Letterbox*, Cixous in this text continues to develop her innovative and explorative style of writing memory and the workings of time upon emotions. As the narrator sits on a couch in the opening pages and remembers a love affair, she finds that she can only remember part of it. Referred to as "the-scene-that-remains," this scene becomes a character in its own right. As the narrator struggles to remember parts of the scene, the text reflects the workings of memory itself; there are several blank pages, including one that is the beginning of a chapter, and gaps, incomplete dialogues and sentence fragments.

Cixous is well known for her interrogation of words themselves; her texts explore the history of words and phonemes, and examine the workings of gender in language (which is particularly relevant when writing in French). *Love Itself in the Letterbox* is no exception. As the writer writes of memories of a love affair, she engages in different forms of word-play that increasingly make us aware of the writing process, both of the love letters (which are described in the text but never shown) and of the text itself. The title contains the first example of this. The French title is *L'amour même dans la boîte aux lettres*, a play on the homonyms *même* 'itself' and *m'aime* 'loves me.' Cixous develops a series of neologisms that undercut the standard meaning of words and draw the reader's attention to their composition, history, and deeper significance. She also plays with pronouns, interchanging he/she/it, for example, in order to question the politics of language and its consequent limits of representation.

Just as the text questions the workings of memory and language, it simultaneously questions the processes of writing and of reading. Cixous writes about letters, telegrams, novels and poems, thus interrogating a series of different formats of writing and sometimes questioning their usage, such as when the narrator asks the lover whether they would have fallen in love had it not been for her poetry. These pieces of writing become phantom presences that exist beyond the text and create an ambience of nostalgia and loss. As well as interrogating what it means to write, this author also examines what it means to read. She refers to several different writers, and we read Cixous reading them; she comments upon their work and ideas and even incorporates quotations from several of them into the body of her text. These include Franz Kafka, Jacques Derrida, Michel de Montaigne, Charles Baudelaire, Marcel Proust, Stendhal and others.

Due to this highly innovative, experimental style that subverts standard language on many different levels, this text poses several problems to the translator. Indeed, several articles and a recent book entitled *Joyful Babel* all consider the difficulties inherent in translating Cixous's work. Since she is an important author, both in French letters and in literary studies in general, her works have

been translated into several languages by several scholars. Peggy Kamuf in this volume has produced a highly readable work that remains very faithful to the original French text. In particular, Kamuf uses three techniques to render this difficult text accurately in English. First, she includes a number of footnotes that explain the complex word-play in the original French that would be lost to the non-French speaker. These explanations are concise and meaningful. Second, she chooses to place passages that were in languages other than French in the original text in bold type in her translation, adding a footnote to explain this upon its first occurrence. As an accomplished linguist who has an advanced knowledge of several languages, particularly English, Cixous includes a number of phrases from other languages in her text, thus adding a further level of complication to the translator. Kamuf's technique is successful in conveying both the style and the content of the original work. Finally, Kamuf chooses to leave some of the neologisms intact in the original French in italics followed by an explanation in English. This ensures a faithful rendering of Cixous's innovation while ensuring that her text is accurately communicated in English.

Overall, this is a very strong translation of a highly complex work. It is an important addition to the growing body of translations of Cixous's work and will contribute to making this challenging author more accessible to the Anglo-American academy. It will be of use to colleagues working in the fields of gender studies, women's writing and critical theory, and could be used in upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses.

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Zulema Moret. *Esas niñas cuando crecen, ¿Dónde van a parar?* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008: 210 pp.

This is a study that centers on the literary construction of the female subject during her process of growth and development. The author distinguishes between those happy ending, "romance-quest" novels of the nineteenth century and their counterparts of the twentieth century, analyzing the latter through the lens of social and professional opportunities. The themes Moret develops reflect identity, social and personal stories, and the new roles available to women in the twentieth century. Structurally, the author calls attention to the consequence of the following themes: family, friends, travel as apprenticeship, religion, education as a means to achieve success, independence, and the initiation into politics. Focusing on the female portrait of growth and development,

the author forcefully argues a close relationship between the woman's private narrative of growth and development and that of her country's, observing similar patterns from Argentina to Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. From political violence to neoliberalism, Moret suggests that the *Bildungsroman* be read as a crossroads between autobiography and the nation's history, and it is at this juncture where the author promotes compelling discussions with respect to gender, race, and social class.

Highlighting the confrontational zones between the protagonist's expectations and desires, Moret provides a detailed analysis of the construction of woman. The incidence of socio-political means into the growth process is supported by the variables of class and race that create zones of discursive uncertainty and possibility. Moret relies on Fredric Jameson's conceptualization of the process of growth and formation in the novel as a metaphor for the growth of the young nations and former colonies. The author reappropriates the term *Bildungsroman*, following Wilhelm Dilthey's definition in 1870, and focuses on the open-ended quality of the novel's process of development. This quality, she argues, facilitates a reading of the self formation of the hero who is constructing her own identity. Emphasizing the work of critics such as Annis Pratt, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland, for example, the author adeptly compares the construction of female to male heroes and the limited roles reserved for women in female fictions of nineteenth-century Western literature. The apprenticeship of these female protagonists centered on dependency and submission, and their development was essentially characterized in these novels by fear and insecurity. Moret's extensive analysis of what she terms the new feminine novel of the 1970s and 80s, however, breaks ground with a critique of twentieth-century novels such as Griselda Gambaro's *Ganarse la muerte* (1976). Through notes on terror and repression Moret contrasts the figure of the violated nation with that of Cledy's body and the institutional tortures they both endure. Equally enlightening is her rich, socio-economic exploration of the tensions inherent in the rites of passage from infancy to militancy, as in her analysis of Laura Antillano's *Perfume de Gardenia* (1984). This work she defines as an alternative narrative of cultural identity.

Moret's study provides a good review of scholarship on the woman's coming-of-age narrative in addition to a valuable review of literature that reconnects a reading of the novel of self-realization to the autobiography, but centers principally on the decades of the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Moret's review of literature is thorough, but the study could have benefited from a critical reading of more contemporary feminist or transnational feminist theory, and more contemporary and innovative novels, given the publication date of the study and the fact that only Lucía Guerra's *Las noches de Carmen Miranda* (2002) was written in the last decade. There are pieces missing, therefore, that detract from the study. For example, Moret's analysis of psychological deterioration in the Chilean no-

vel would be more compelling with the relevant socio-political integration of memory and the Bachelet era. The most original chapter is the final one, which explores the positioning of the Latin American female author and the zones of confrontation (nation, city, travel) in her construction and deconstruction of the female myth and protagonist, and points toward future study.

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Terry Eagleton. *Trouble with Strangers: A Study of Ethics*. Chischester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 347 pp.

In *Trouble with Strangers*, Terry Eagleton uses Jacques Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real to analyze and categorize most ethical theories that have emerged in the Western world. It is not, however, a strict categorization, since several Lacanian registers appear to be interwoven in the discussed ethical theories. Eagleton provides abundant examples from philosophical, religious and literary texts; one of his arguments is that, as he announces in his foreword, socialism and the Judeo-Christian tradition offer richer perspectives on ethical thought than some philosophical theories. The study is divided into three major sections (one for each Lacanian register). Each starts with a description of the psychoanalytical category that serves as its reference. In each section, Eagleton explains the parallels he makes between certain ethical theories and a psychoanalytical category. The title of the book points to the fact that ethics is not only about knowing right and wrong but also about our relationship to others.

In the first part (The Insistence of the Imaginary), the author focuses on Anglo-Saxon philosophers of the eighteenth century, but he also draws comparisons with thinkers of other periods. According to Eagleton, Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Edmund Burke and Adam Smith can be seen, despite their differences, as being part of an ethic of the Imaginary because of their sense of connection with the immediate environment and because of the value they give to sentiments. Eagleton acknowledges that all theories cannot be strictly limited to one psychoanalytical category. For instance, these four philosophers, whom he calls "benevolists," do not share the same trust in a spontaneous universal benevolence; some, such as Hume, recognize the need for laws and institutions that guarantee justice, which means that his theory overlaps with the register of the Symbolic. The first chapters dealing with the "benevolists" emphasize the importance and complexity of the relationship with others

in ethics theory. As Eagleton puts it, “morality is the tiresome consequence of not being on our own. Like Jean Paul Sartre’s hell, ethics is other people” (74), hence the need for regulations and the existence of an ethics of the Symbolic.

Symbolic ethics is discussed in part II. Eagleton reminds us that lack, desire and law are key concepts of the symbolic order; the philosophers of the Symbolic are those who subscribe to the idea of a law that is to be respected. The Symbolic “is a realm of regulation and legality, unlike the polymorphous nature of the imaginary.... Only by laying violent hands upon itself, representing its illicit desire and guiltily renouncing its *jouissance*, can the subject come into its own as a speaking, acting apparently autonomous being” (85-86). In this section, the author focuses on Benedictus de Spinoza and Immanuel Kant, whose theories on individual freedom differ, but who both distrust knowledge based on emotion. Both subscribe to a kind of determinism and both regard the self as a universal subject. For Eagleton, although the abstractness of the law encourages an ideal of equality, Kant’s theory remains too abstract and his insistence on individual will is too “atomistic” (126), so it is lacking compared to socialist ethics that takes into account the social organization and builds in it “a form of reciprocity” (126). Eagleton makes it clear that neither Spinoza nor Kant can be contained in the symbolic realm; for him both thinkers eventually seem to turn towards an imaginary register: through a reconciliation between mind and nature for Spinoza, and, for Kant, through aesthetics, which gives a sense “that we are at home in the world in a way which seems contrary to the findings of reason” (127). Eagleton ends his discussion on symbolic ethics with an analysis of law, desire and subjectivity in Shakespeare’s play *Measure for Measure*.

The third and lengthiest part of *Trouble with Strangers* analyzes the ethics of the Real. It starts with a discussion of Lacan’s views on desire in ethics and it includes a comparison with Judaeo-Christian thought. For Eagleton, Lacan’s conception of ethics is not as new as he claims since in the Judaeo-Christian tradition “desire (the human longing for God)” (148) is central to morality, but whereas Lacanians consider desire and good as opposed, for Christians such as Thomas Aquinas, “the good is what we cannot help desiring” (148) even if “perfect good” remains out of reach. Eagleton seems to agree that desire and good are not incompatible if the concept of love is introduced. Part III has four chapters. The first one discusses Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Eagleton puts each philosopher’s theories in relation to Lacan’s realms of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. The second chapter is a study of fiction that allows Eagleton to draw a list of protagonists of the Real who all share a willingness to die for what they can’t live without. The third chapter is devoted to Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida and Alain Badiou. While aware of the differences between these philosophers (particularly Badiou’s views on universality), Eagleton insists on the fact that they do share a

few things, chiefly “the banal assumption that all orthodoxies are oppressive, all consensus stifling and all heterodoxies to be applauded” (266), to the point that it almost becomes a bias that leads to a dead end. According to Eagleton only Badiou allows for some continuity into everyday politics. In the last chapter of this section, Eagleton criticizes the excessive attachment of French 20th century thinkers to the idea of subversion and a misguided disdain for the mundane that sometimes lead to cliquish elitism. Eagleton insists that ethics and real life politics can’t be considered completely distinct; they are “different viewpoints on the same object” (316).

Trouble with Strangers is a thought-provoking approach to the reflection on ethics and politics in our century, and the comments on French post-modernists’ idealization of dissidence are of particular interest. But, although Eagleton makes a convincing argument that all three Lacanian registers are intertwined in ethics and that in theory Judaeo-Christianity and socialism are less limited than most ethical theories, it remains difficult to disassociate theory from the very unethical way both systems of thought have been used by institutions.

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Dominic Moran. *Pablo Neruda*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2009. 217 pp.

This is, I think, Moran’s second book. Compared with his first, a close and erudite study of Julio Cortázar, it is something of a pot-boiler, being a straightforward, fairly short and unpretentious literary biography. It follows the pattern already established in this familiar Critical Lives series, detailing the main facts of Pablo Neruda’s life and work without attempting to set them within any wide framework of literary history or proposing any fancy theories about the poet’s personality or evolution. It is essentially informative and relatively introductory, though not for that reason without expressing judgments both of the man and his work, with which (now that the dust has largely settled around this highly ideological writer) most uncommitted readers will readily agree.

Unlike Jorge Luis Borges who, in his later verse at least, always stood outside the mainstream developments in Spanish American poetry and now seems a curiously isolated figure so far as that side of his work is concerned, Neruda’s influence blanketed poetry in Spanish America for at least a generation. At times it had an almost stifling effect, until Nicanor Parra and others launched a new pattern of thematics and diction, the impact of which Neruda himself

did not wholly escape, notably in some of his *Odas elementales*. Even so, we can still see very obviously the impact of *Canto general* on a fellow Left-Wing poet like Ernesto Cardenal. We stand in need of a serious, wide-ranging study of the evolution of diction in modern Spanish American poetry during and after *modernismo* to which the contribution of Neruda would be crucial. In retrospect his prestige seems to be fading slightly, while that of César Vallejo appears to be surviving better. But, as Moran cogently emphasizes, the publication of the first two parts of *Residencia en la tierra* was epoch-making. Beginning in the mid-1920s (how many of us remember what Moran carefully points out: that a number of the poems in the first volume of *Residencia*, including “*Galope muerto*”, date from before the poet left Chile for the far East?) Neruda was “forging a poetic language radically different from that of the *Veinte poemas* and even the avant-garde *Tentativa del hombre infinito*” (48). Just how different has never been adequately explored. Nor, for that matter, has Neruda’s very earliest poetry (he was an adolescent prodigy) which Moran might have noticed in more detail. The mystery of those adolescent years, which Moran largely ignores, preferring to deal with poetic influences and Neruda’s choice of his pen-name, is the origin of the crisis which the poet (not yet twenty) referred to in the *Veinte poemas* as his “old pain.” It intensified subsequently and took on existential overtones dominating his work right up to the shift at the end of *Residencia*.

The question which occupies critics with regard to the middle of Neruda’s career is whether his overt move towards the political Left which produced that shift and the repudiation to some extent of his *Residencia* poetry gave rise to work as important as what had gone before. Moran seems to align himself broadly with those who regard *Residencia en la tierra* as “his greatest collection” (46). It would have been worth discussing more specifically for an English-speaking public what is involved in reading *Canto general* as against reading *Residencia* and why the former might impact on a Spanish American readership differently from the way it might impact on European or North American readers. It is instructive to observe how criticism of “*Alturas de Macchu Picchu*” from *Canto general* initially tended to foreground the early cantos rather than the later, more revolutionary, ones. Robert Pring-Mill struggled against the widespread critical tendency to deprecate overt political commitment in poetry, including that of Neruda. It was a losing battle, one feels, but his outlook perhaps deserved a little more attention. By this time Neruda had “appointed himself spokesman” for the proletariat (99). Moran’s description of his Stalinist poetry (“an embarrassing nadir in his output”, 130) and the slow process of his subsequent unwilling retreat from that pattern of outlook is extremely helpful. Neruda wrote too much. After the splendid self-renewal of the *Odas elementales*, it is tempting to see the rest of his poetry as a long decline. Moran’s account of it is necessarily sketchy, since this is not primarily a critical work.

The concentration has to be on Neruda as a public figure and on his “familiar pendulum swing” from high politics (leading up to his participation in the election of Salvador Allende as President of Chile) to the “soap opera-style melodrama of his personal affairs” (179). His burial was an important moment for the Left in recent Chilean history. Moran does not pull any punches. He guides us through the high points of Neruda’s production right up to the end, but does not hesitate to be abrasive about his shortcomings both as a poet and as a man. After teaching Neruda for decades, I find this a handy and useful volume.

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